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TAGS: [PREL](#) [BE](#) [CG](#)  
SUBJECT: BELGIAN FM DE GUCHT'S PLANNED APRIL 10-12 VISIT TO  
DRC FACING SERIOUS OBSTACLES

Classified By: Political Counselor Theodore H Andrews, Reasons 1.4 (B)  
and (D)

¶1. (C) Belgian Foreign Minister De Gucht's planned visit on April 9-10 to the DRC is facing serious obstacles, according to Belgian Great Lakes Special Envoy Smets. As of April 5, the DRC authorities had yet to give any formal sanction to the trip, or to offer any indication that De Gucht would meet with his counterpart, or with President Kabila. Belgian PM Verhofstadt planned to pressure Kabila to grant permission in a phone call scheduled for the 5th.

¶2. (C) The Belgians believe the recent troubles in Kinshasa have empowered the hard-liners in Kabila's entourage. Their dislike of De Gucht, always high in the best of times, increased as a result of the recent EU statement on the violence, and over a leaked internal document that cites a much higher casualty figure than the publicly declared number, Smets declared. Ambassador Adam, head of the Congo desk in the Belgian MFA, told us also that the apparently waning influence of the DRC ambassador here was another worrying sign that the hard-liners were ascendant. He seemed of late to have lost his ready access to the President and his key advisers.

¶3. (U) In addition to a still hoped for session with the Congolese leadership, De Gucht intends to deliver a speech at a Kinshasa hotel before the Congolese political class. He will go also to Lubumbashi to open a conference on natural resource use.

¶4. (SBU) De Gucht's Africa tour will kick off on April 9 in Monrovia. After the April 9-10 stop in the DRC, he heads to Luanda on April 12-13 where Angolan involvement with the Congolese army's integrated brigades will be the main topic. Next follows a trip to Lusaka on April 13-14, a stop in Kigali on April 14-16, and then participation in two Great Lakes meetings in Bujumbura on April 17-18. One meeting concerns economic integration, and the second the meeting of the Great Lakes military chiefs of staff. EU Commissioner Michel is expected to participate in the economic affairs meeting. Imbrie

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